



Metropolitan King County Council

February 13, 2007

The Honorable Christine Gregoire  
Governor  
State of Washington  
PO Box 40002  
Olympia, WA 98504-0002

The Honorable Margarita Prentice  
Chair, Ways and Means Committee  
Washington State Senate  
PO Box 40411  
Olympia, WA 98504-0411

Dear Governor Gregoire and Senator Prentice,

We understand that the State Legislature is now considering legislation that would finance a new Sonics arena in King County, and that this finance plan may require the Metropolitan King County Council to authorize at least \$300 million in revenue for the project from the King County hotel-motel tax, restaurant tax, and car rental tax.

We strongly believe that any decision to use additional local King County taxes to finance a new Sonics arena should be made by the voters of King County. Without a public vote, we will not approve any King County tax increase, including use of the King County hotel-motel, restaurant, and car rental taxes to finance an arena.

We believe that a public vote would be required before any local taxes are authorized because of our state's history of strong public involvement in stadium projects, specifically:


- King County voters rejected public funding for construction of a new baseball stadium in September, 1995. There was no public vote on the eventual public funding package for Safeco Field. Public resentment about this continues to this day.
- Statewide voters approved public funding for construction of a new football stadium and event center when Referendum 48 passed in 1997.
- Seattle voters rejected public funding for a new basketball arena in the city when Seattle Initiative I-91 passed in 2006.
- Taxpayers are currently paying for the Kingdome, Key Arena, Safeco Field, and Qwest Field/Event Center. Voters deserve a direct voice in the decision to add a fifth stadium to their tax bill.

Further, it is more appropriate that this decision rest with state, not county, government, because over the last decade the state has effectively become the entity overseeing construction and management of stadiums. This is evidenced by the creation of two

state public facilities districts: the Washington State Major League Baseball Stadium Public Facilities District (Safeco Field) and the Washington State Public Stadium Authority (Qwest Field and Event Center).

We are longtime Sonics fans, and we appreciate the economic and cultural benefits of having the team in our region. However, given the history outlined above, we will not support public subsidies of a facility for a private sports franchise without a public vote directing us to do so.

Sincerely,

  
Larry Phillips, District Four

  
Larry Gossett, Council Chair

  
Julia Patterson, Council Vice Chair

  
Dow Constantine, District Eight

  
Bob Ferguson, District One

cc: Washington State Senate  
Washington State House of Representatives  
The Honorable Ron Sims, King County Executive  
Metropolitan King County Councilmembers  
The Honorable Greg Nickels, Mayor, City of Seattle  
Seattle City Councilmembers  
David Schumacher, Staff Coordinator, Washington State Senate Ways and  
Means Committee  
Charlie Gavigan, Staff Coordinator, Washington State House of Representatives  
Appropriations Committee  
Chuck Williams, Director of Governmental Relations, Metropolitan King County  
Council  
Clay Bennett, Owner, Seattle Sonics & Storm